

U.S. Military Academy - Gun Shed
South side of Swift Road, south of Buffalo Soldier Road
U.S. Military Academy
West Point
Orange County
New York

HABS No. NY-5708-56

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

U.S. MILITARY ACADEMY - GUN SHED

LOCATION: South side of Swift Road, south of Buffalo Soldier Road,
U.S. Military Academy, West Point, Orange County, New York.

USGS

PRESENT OWNER
AND OCCUPANT: U.S. Military Academy, Department of the Army.

PRESENT USE: Retail stores, storage, visitor's information.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Gun Shed at the Buffalo Soldier Field is one of five Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson buildings that define the western and southern edges of Buffalo Soldier Field. The neo-gothic character of the buildings create a cohesive group and reflect the general style of the firm's work at the Academy. Although their original function no longer exists, the five buildings are symbolic of an historic military tradition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1904-1908.
2. Architect: Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, Architects, Boston and New York.
3. Original and subsequent owners: U.S. Military Academy, Department of the Army.
4. Builder: Church Construction Company. The Church Company defaulted on construction and the work was finished by the bonding company.
5. Original plans and construction: Consult original Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson drawings for the original interior arrangement. "The original building was only one-half of the existing building consisting of the east wing and what is now the center brick pavilion. In 1919 Arthur B. Proctor, a Captain in the Quartermaster Corps, designed the west wing to match the earlier construction." (Grashof) As a unit the buildings cost \$547,107.

The Annual Report of 1909 mentions the site work: "The work of grading, topsoiling, and seeding the new artillery and cavalry drill ground, at the south end of the post, was completed early in June, with the exception of a small portion in the vicinity of the south gate guard-house, which had to be postponed until the stonecutting yard of one of

the contractors could be removed. This was done early in July, and the grading of the new drill ground practically completed by August 1. A good growth of pasture grass has been obtained, which it is believed will withstand the wear and tear of mounted drill sufficiently to prevent the annoyance from dust that usually occurred when the old ground was used."

6. Alterations and additions: The building was converted from a gun shed in the mid-1950s.

- B. Historical Context: The gun shed was designed as part of a group which consisted of the Artillery Barracks (HABS No. NY-5708-27), the Artillery Stables (HABS No. NY-5708-46), the Cavalry Barracks (HABS No. NY-5708-28) and the Cavalry Stables (HABS No. NY-5708-47). These were grouped around the "Cavalry Plain" where instruction was given. The area was renamed Buffalo Soldier Field after the Ninth Cavalry detachment of black cavalrymen assigned to West Point in 1907. (See "Saga of the 'Buffalo Soldiers'" in the Supplemental Material section.) For the historical context of this area within the overall development of the Academy see HABS No. NY-5708, Volume 2: "West Point: An Overview of the History and Physical Development of the United States Military Academy."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Gun Shed is representative of the work of Gram, Goodhue and Ferguson at the U.S. Military Academy in the first decade of the 20th century. Although it has been greatly altered recently, its center pavilion with brick walls and limestone trim and its extension of bay openings to either side combine to create a Gothic appearance to match the other four Gram, Goodhue and Ferguson buildings around Buffalo Soldier Field. This architectural unity about the broad, open plain helps create a distinctive image for the area.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in fair condition.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Gun Shed is a long, narrow rectangular building that defines the southern boundary of the Buffalo Soldier Field. A central pavilion has brick walls with limestone arches, trim, sills and cornice capping. The flanking bays are defined by brick and concrete piers with heavy wood beams as lintels. The combination and design of the materials helps create a medieval flavor.
2. Foundation: Granite is used for the foundation walls.
3. Walls: The exterior walls of the Gun Shed are red brick laid in a Flemish bond with brick, wood and limestone detailing.

Limestone is used for the sills, for the windows, and for the arched openings in the center pavilion beltcourse and cornice capping.

Vertical wood siding has recently been used to fill-in the bay openings in the eastern wing of the building, greatly detracting from the character of the building.

4. Structural systems: Load bearing brick walls, brick and concrete piers and heavy timber trusses for the roof make up the structural systems for the Gun Shed.
5. Chimneys: One square brick chimney exists on the north end of the building.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: On the front (north) facade, the doorways have been filled-in with vertical wood siding on the eastern wing, except where an entry projection has been recently added to provide access to the beverage center inside. The west wing of the front facade has overhead garage doors. The center pavilion has one original vertical paneled door with large strap hinges, while the other openings have been filled with wood and metal panels.

The openings on the south facade, corresponding to those on the north, have been filled-in with metal panels.

- b. Windows: Two-over-two double-hung wood sash windows exist in the center pavilion's north facade, while the west facade has two four-pane double casement windows.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The hip roof is covered with different colored slate arranged in a random pattern.
 - b. Eaves: The wood rafter ends are exposed beneath the wood eaves.

B. Description of Interior: While the original brick flooring still remains, the interior has been vastly altered through the addition of new partitions and plasterboard walls to serve the needs of the beverage center in the eastern wing and the rental shop in the western wing.

C. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Gun Shed is oriented to the north, defining the southern edge of the Buffalo Soldier Field. The land is level to all sides. To the north of the building is an asphalt parking lot and then Swift Road, two features which weaken the link between the structure and the open plain beyond. To the west, the land very gently slopes upward with a scattering of deciduous and coniferous trees. To the south, across a gravel covered "driveway," the land is moderately wooded along the border to the U.S. Military Academy. To the east is Thayer Gate, the main entrance to the Academy. A few deciduous trees are scattered about the site.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: Original ink-on-linen working drawings are in the Facilities Engineer's Office, Directorate of Engineering and Housing, U.S. Military Academy. Subsequent alteration drawings are also found there.
- B. Early Views: Early photographs can be found in the U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collections. Some of these are reproduced in the Grashof and Lange volumes of this project.
- C. Bibliography:
 - 1. Primary and unpublished sources: Records, U.S. Military Academy Archives and Special Collections. See bibliographic essay in the Lange volume of this project for a listing of record groups.
 - 2. Secondary and published sources:

Annual Reports, U.S. Military Academy Archives.

Grashof, Bethanie C. "Building Analysis and Preservation Guidelines for Category I and Selected Category II Buildings at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York," Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983. HABS No. NY-5708.

Lange, Robie S. "West Point: An Overview of the History and Physical Development of the United States Military Academy," Historic American Buildings Survey, 1983. HABS No. NY-5708.
- D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: The records of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson.
- E. Supplemental Material:
 - 1. "Saga of the 'Buffalo Soldiers,'" Pointer View, May 18, 1973.

1. "Saga of the 'Buffalo Soldiers,'" from the Pointer View, May 18, 1973. U.S. Military Academy Archives.



Part of Ninth Cavalry's "Buffalo Soldiers" assigned to West Point in 1910. Bldgs. 622 and 626 were then stables. (USMA Archives)

Recounted for Armed Forces ceremonies

Saga of the 'Buffalo Soldiers'

For 20 years after the Civil War two black cavalry regiments wrestled the West from the Dakotas to the Rio Grande — wrangling with hostile Indians, bandits, cattle thieves, murderous gunmen, bootleggers, trespassers, and Mexican revolutionaries.

Near the turn of the century both regiments galloped into the war with Spain, storming San Juan Hill with the Rough Riders and joining the siege of Santiago.

Yet the black cavalymen — dubbed "Buffalo Soldiers" by Indian warriors who learned to respect the dogged Black soldiers — rode quietly and inconspicuously through the chapters of American history.

One of their last rides in the early 1900's brought them to West Point where they turned to training cadets in horsemanship.

Today the Cavalry is gone and the stables are offices. But the name becomes a permanent fixture when West Point salutes the Buffalo Soldiers in Armed Forces Day ceremonies at 1:30 p.m., Saturday. Cavalry Plain, now an athletic field at the south end of West Point, will be dedicated and renamed Buffalo Soldier Field.

Former members of the Ninth and Tenth U.S. Cavalry Regiments and members of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Association attend the ceremonies on the field along with local dignitaries. LTG William

A. Knowlton, USMA Superintendent, will deliver the keynote address.

The ceremonies will only be a part of Armed Forces Day activities planned for West Point and Highland Falls. (See box).

A regiment of cadets is also expected to join marching units in the Armed Forces Day Parade in New York City.

The remarkable story of the unheralded

Buffalo Soldiers' efforts in taming the West unfolds in William H. Leckie's book, *The Buffalo Soldier*.

Leckie noted in his study that "in thousands of pages the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Cavalry, great regiments all, rode and fought their way to glory, but the Negro troopers were usually dismissed with a bare mention, ignored completely, or their efforts mocked."

"Many a frontier official owed his life and his job to the support given him by these Black men in blue."

As the Indian Wars subsided, Buffalo Soldiers played an integral role in the War with Spain. They fought in the Philippines and Cuba. General Pershing, who earned his nickname of Black Jack by leading Black troops in the West, was proud of his Black troops in the Santiago campaign. Colonel Teddy Roosevelt later wrote, "The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments fought one on either side of mine at Santiago, and I wish no better men beside me in battle than these colored troops showed themselves to be."

In 1907 a detachment of the Ninth Cavalry was assigned to West Point in support of cadet riding instruction and mounted drill, which was conducted on the ground now known as Cavalry Plain.

In 1931 it was replaced by the 2nd Squadron of the Tenth Cavalry which remained at West Point until its de-activation in 1946.

Tomorrow's slate

TIME	EVENT
10 a.m.-4 p.m.	Equipment Display at Buffalo Soldier Field.
1:30 p.m.	Dedication Ceremony & Cadet Review at Buffalo Soldier Field.
2:15 p.m.	Demonstration by Cadet Riding Club at Buffalo Soldier Field.
3:30 p.m.	Sky Diving Demonstration by Cadet Parachute Club at Buffalo Soldier Field.
9 a.m.-5 p.m.	Spring Sidewalk Sale and Arts Festival in Highland Falls.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation is part of a multi-year project sponsored by the National Park Service and the United States Military Academy, explained in the United States Military Academy, HABS No. NY-5708, Volume 1, "Methodology." This written documentation was prepared by Travis C. McDonald, Jr. and Timothy Lindblad, architectural historians, in 1984-1985 based on fieldwork conducted in 1984.